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THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF EXCELLENCE

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## Cotton Center ISD Mission Statement

**“Our mission is to graduate all students with skills and values to successfully compete as life-long learners.”**

**E.L.K.S.**  
Excellence  
in  
Learning  
Knowledge  
and  
Skills

## Problems Versus Challenges

So what is the difference between a problem and a challenge? In a word, it is perception. And this makes all the difference in the world, for it affects one's attitude which, in turn, affects one's success.

When I was at Spur, I would tell my athletes that there were no problems in life, only challenges. Then I would go on to explain that problems are what one sees when they take their eyes off the goal. As humans, we are governed by our five senses and primarily by what we see or hear. When the storms of life attack us through our circumstances, and there seems to be no escape, our perception can either be one of misery because of the calamity or one of hope because of unexplored opportunities. When we approach our crisis as an opportunity to become better, our life becomes more rewarding.

Mark Twain once said, "It's not the size of the dog in the fight that counts but the size of the fight in the dog." This is an internal issue of character. How tough are you? One can easily respond to adverse circumstances with negativity, but a strong person has a positive attitude when things are bad. Instead of being reactive, the one who has character is proactive. This type of individual understands that if the bad cannot be endured, then the good will never be seen. Dreams can only come true when failures are recognized as the first steps of success.

This article is about

perception: problems versus challenges. When a person sees that opportunity's favorite disguise is trouble, problems no longer become an issue—they become a tool for greatness. When one believes that opportunities take shape within problems, the perception of problems dissipate. This is the paradigm necessary for facing life's trials. With this kind of attitude, one learns to make stepping stones out of stumbling blocks.

I recall a story that occurred when there were dirigibles. These large blimps were held to the ground with the help of servicemen who held the tethers connected to the ship. This balloon escaped the ground and began floating into the air. Those who held to the lines either let go or were pulled up into the air. Many fell from the sky and were either killed or seriously injured; however, one continued to hang to a cord and remained suspended in midair for hours.

Everyone thought he would fall to the earth and be killed, but he continued to hang. When the craft was finally brought down, an ambulance and doctor were on the spot expecting possible medical problems. He was fine. When asked how he survived, he said, "When I got up to high to let go, I just wrapped the rope around my waste and let the cord hold me up."

This man was at the end of his rope, but he tied it around himself and swung free. This is what we need to do.

There are no circumstances so bad or obstacles so big that a person of excellence cannot conquer them.

There are no hopeless situations; only those who have grown hopeless. Hopelessness will always be based off the perception of one's reality or outward circumstances. A positive attitude realizes that the darkest hour has only 60 minutes; whereas, a person who is pessimistic believes the darkest hour to be interminable.

Attitude is the key to success. A good attitude will figure out how to move a mountain by carrying away small stones. A good attitude will realize there is an advantage in every disadvantage and an opportunity in every problem. A good attitude is shaped by intrepidity. I realize this every day in school. By being gallant and fearless, I set the tone for success. My difficulties then vanish because I face them boldly.

This, to me, is one of the greatest obstacles to excellence. Teens face failure, and they think that losing is an egregious error, but losing is not disgraceful. Quitting is. Those who give up do not realize that today's opportunities will erase yesterday's failures.

Those who look at their problems from a negative perspective will never become great. Those who never meet adversity will never know their strength of character. Be glad when things go awry. It's an opportunity to improve.